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DEPARTMENT OF VISITING NURSING AND SOCIAL WELFARE

IN CHARGE OF

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PUBLIC HEALTH AND SCHOOL NURSING IN SALT LAKE CITY

BY ALMA M. KARLSSON, R.N.

Salt Lake City.

Visiting nursing was first established in Salt Lake City in 1910 when the St. Mark's Charity Association engaged a nurse merely as an experiment to care for the sick poor. Although very little encouragement or support was received from the public yet success was assured from the beginning.

In various ways attention had been attracted to the cause but with little or no effect in extending the work until the Health Commissioner, Dr. S. G. Paul, always having believed that a great deal of good could be accomplished by school inspection, was able to establish a division of school nurses in connection with the health department. To begin with, in January 1913, two nurses were appointed for work in school inspection.

As was expected this new movement met with some opposition partly from the school patrons and partly from the medical profession but this opposition was only by individuals. Talks to the parents' associations of the various schools by members of the health department, explaining the objects of school inspection and the work to be done by the nurses, practically ended all opposition from that source. Within two months after the work was started complaints by parents were rare and today the work enjoys the support of the Board of Education, principals, teachers, parents and the medical profession. Dr. Paul reports that the school principals have petitioned the City Commission to double the number of nurses beginning September, 1914.

Considering that this movement was only started the last half of the school year, with but two nurses in a field of twenty-seven schools with an average attendance of 17,351 pupils, a surprising amount of good was accomplished. At the close of school, plans were made by the health department to open a milk station on July 1, 1913, but due to unavoidable delay this station was not opened until July 31.

With the kindly coöperation and aid of the Non-Sectarian League, the Mormon Relief Society and the St. Mark's Charity Association two more workers were engaged for the summer months. Of these four workers, three were employed in the milk station and child welfare work, while the fourth devoted her entire time to the investigation of all cases of typhoid reported to the Board of Health. A physician from the Board of Health was in daily attendance at the milk station giving his service free to those unable to pay for medical advice. Through this work a great many mothers were taught how to feed, bathe and care for their little folks, not only infants but also the older children. Pamphlets relative to the care of babies, the care of milk, the danger from flies and the danger from soothing syrups and teething powders were distributed.

Milk and materials for milk modification were furnished free to those unable to pay and a nominal charge made to others. All cases applying to the station were followed up by the nurses and home instructions given in milk modification, the care of the baby and the hygiene of the home. Many cases that had not applied to the station were found by the nurses in their general work in the district, the same instructions were given here and where needed, medical aid obtained.

With the opening of school in September, it was necessary to reduce the work done at the milk station, one worker remaining.

Realizing the value of school nurses and with the record of the work done in the last half of the past school year, Dr. Paul applied to the City Commission for, and was granted authority to appoint three additional nurses. With four nurses in the schools and one in the health office, contagion of serious nature has been decreased, while such diseases as measles, whooping cough, chicken-pox, and mumps have shown an increase due for the most part to the discovery by the nurses of many cases that would have gone unreported.

Splendid work had also been done along the line of correcting physical defects in children. In many cases it was only necessary to call the attention of the parents to the need of medical attention, in other cases where people were not indigents and county charges, the excuse was made that they could not afford to have the work done at the present time. Practically all specialists in the medical profession offered their services free for this class of cases.

The nurse's first duty on arriving at the school is to inspect all children who had been absent, issuing permits to those eligible to return to school and excluding those where any suspicion of contagious disease exists. After this work is done the nurse visits the various rooms making a general inspection of all children and excluding any suspected

cases of contagious diseases. Names and addresses of all children excluded are immediately reported to the Board of Health office and the cases are then visited by one of the physicians of the department and definite diagnoses made. In case of any physical defects the nurse visits the home and calls the attention of the parents to the condition, recommending that they consult their family physician.

During the school year of 1913-1914 each of the twenty-seven schools of the city was visited twice weekly. The workers have every reason to feel proud of the system and of the success of school inspection in Salt Lake City, as the only opposition met with was in the very beginning of the work and this was not of a serious nature. It is doubtful if school inspection was ever established with less opposition and criticism anywhere.

Plans for this summer included anti-typhoid and anti-tuberculosis work, mothers' clubs, little mothers' club, and the establishment of three Board of Health milk stations. The Board of Education has generously given the use of three of its school buildings in which to conduct the milk stations. This gives ample room for lectures, demonstrations, etc. The domestic science departments in these schools afford ideal quarters for demonstrating the methods of milk modification and food preparations for infants.

One of the most interesting branches of this work is the Little Mothers' Clubs, in which instruction is given girls of twelve years and up in the intelligent application of hygiene and sanitation in their homes.

One of the main features of the milk station is the distribution of pure milk free to those in poor circumstances, and at cost to those able to pay. In view of the increasing interest and support of the citizens of Salt Lake City the nurses have great hopes for the future.